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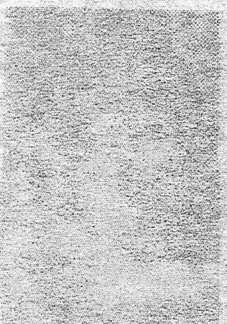
Dick Nolan

'Tax Reform' [illegible] Absurdity

"The frogs [illegible] a king, [illegible] didn't want to choose [illegible] of themselves. In[illegible] with a long [illegible] king started eating [illegible]," said Aesop the [illegible].

[illegible] is a harsh judgment that every working person who voted for Richard Nixon, or who didn't vote at all, has since got exactly what he asked for, doubled, re-doubled, and in spades.

Richard the Frog King has been devouring his people in a manner so cold as to be astonishing. It goes beyond ordinary contempt; there is about the procedure a robot-like implacability in which human emotions play no part. I don't think, as some have hypothesized, that Richard Nixon has an abiding hatred of the people. I think that he thinks that the people count for absolutely nothing.



DICK NOLAN

Lately, I have been noticing in some papers, amid all the other uproar, that our President wishes to readjust our income tax forms.

[illegible] even we dumb frogs are quite dumb enough to expect Richard Nixon to make adjustments which might adversely affect J. Paul Getty, or Howard Hughes, or for that matter, Abplanalp, Rebozo & Nixon, realtors. But isn't there something chillingly remorseless in the way Nixon zeroes in on the ordinary taxpayer's pitiful MEDICAL DEDUCTION?

Here's a guy who, while spending millions just to flit from house to house with entourage, can use the Presidential veto on a two-buck minimum wage bill.

Here's a robot who can scan the income tax form for loopholes, miss those you can drive a Brinks truck through, and propose choking off the minimal tax relief now available to an ordinary citizen whose medical bills have been catastrophic.

The first step in this direction came last spring when Nixon's Treasury Department popped it as a "reform" program. Then it was in milder form. Obviously the Nixon people thought we were getting away with too much, and thought to clip us sharply, if only to remind us of who's in charge.

In full flower, the program went a step further — was THE step further last week. It was proposed to do away with the medical deduction entirely, then perhaps, maybe, who knows, tie in a medical insurance plan we'd buy with the money instead, we'd see.

Nixon himself, while all this was going on, was admitting coyly that he'd paid no income tax on what certainly looks like a handsome profit on his fast realty shuffle at San Clemente. It was a matter of dispute, he said, whether it was a capital gain or not. He didn't add who decides such disputes.

What makes this Nixon "tax reform" an absurdity beyond laughter is the niggardliness of the common medical deduction as it stands. As I have noted here before, a hunk of machinery gets much better tax treatment than a human, and this remains so before Nixon even gets his hands on the tax laws.

Ordinary maintenance of the human body is not treated, for tax purposes, like ordinary maintenance of a stamping press, a milling machine, or one of Abplanalp's plastics formers that turn out those spray can valves. Ordinary depreciation isn't figured in, either, as it is for Abplanalp's plant, Rebozo's real estate, or Nixon's law library.

The best the taxers have ever allowed us is to recapture a part of our medical costs—the catastrophic part over and above what they consider routine payments for doctors, dentists and prescription medicines.

Now comes Nixon to wipe out even this consideration, and coming as it does on top of all the other imperious Frog King chastisements of the ordinary folk, it amounts to nothing less than a damnable outrage.

The medical deduction ought to be altered, all right. But the change should permit a tax credit for every dime spent keeping the old bod in shape. The logic of this, if you earn your living with your hands and your head, is too obvious to need underscoring. Income-earning, after all, is the excuse for the warm consideration given to machines.